

shall view God forever, how vivid must not Mary's perception of God be—Mary—whose soul is whiter than the faces of the Seraphs?

Other saints have had characteristic virtues. Mary is the personification of every virtue. Her faith, which was scarcely less than Vision, was not greater than her Hope, which was absolute certainty, while her charity for God was the moving principle of her life, and the proximate cause of her death. Her obedience was perfect, for her will was identified with the Will of God; her patience under suffering was superhuman; her poverty was perfect—only think of the stable, and her years of dependence upon John during the later years of her life. In a word, Mary spoke her vows in the Temple. They were the first notes of a life-hymn, whose music sounded strangely pleasing in the ears of God; it drew Him down from Heaven; it will hold Him spellbound for eternity, and in saying all this, I am but paraphrasing the words of Gabriel, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you."

They say that it was the foreknowledge of the dignity to which God would raise our nature by assuming it in the Incarnation that so scandalized Lucifer and his fellows that they rebelled and were lost. I think that if he could see Mary today near the same Sacred Humanity of Jesus in Heaven his angelic pride would be doubly offended. Angelic natures in Heaven; lost Angelic natures in Hell; human nature upon earth; but human nature, too, most highly honored in Heaven. Angelic natures confirmed in glory on heaven; Angelic natures hopelessly lost in Hell. Men struggling between both on earth.

But two human hands ever uplifted before the face of God in Heaven, and a face upturned to Him, on which He cannot look without emotion. Neither can we, my beloved, look upon it without hope. If I had only a certainty that those hands were ever uplifted for me in

Heaven, or that the voice of the Mother ever pleaded for me with her Son, I should not envy the angels their confirmed glory, or the security of their bliss. Reign on! Great Queen! Draw thy bright mantle around thee! Fix the star-diadem on thy head! Royalty, even though it be the Royalty of Heaven, shall be to thee no sinecure. Thou hast us and a whole world yet to save!

*Libanus: as a geographic designation, is the mountain range that extends across the whole country of Lebanon. Used in the O.T. as a metaphor for royal dignity and majesty.

Note: It is believed that the Virgin Mary spent her last years in the vicinity of Ephesus and that she had died there.

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The Death of Mary

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They say that at the hour of death the mind is empowered to cast one great retrospective glance over its life, and that glance comprehends every thought, every word, every action, in their minutest details.

If it be so, what a strange panorama was that which passed before the eyes of Mary. The quiet days in the Temple, the little room at Nazareth lighted up by the presence of an angel, the few words that were spoken, and the mighty ineffable mystery that was accomplished that evening on the hills of Judea, when Elizabeth came to meet her, and saluted her as the Mother of God, and she herself in the exuberance of her gratitude, broke out under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, into the sublime strains of the Magnificat; the horror that filled her soul when Simeon revealed to her at what a terrible cost she had become the Mother of Him that was to be crucified for His people, the desolation and the sorrow of the three days she was separated from Jesus; every painful circumstance connected with the flight into Egypt—the hurried preparation, the cries of the children, the wailing of the mothers, the silent, weary journey on the desert, the strange Egyptian faces in Heliopolis; that day in Cana, when to please her, Jesus anticipated His time and broke through the eternal decree; the three years' missionary life, and the crowing sorrow on Calvary.

Yes! Jesus dying in pain, and His Mother dying in peace. Jesus dying friendless, forsaken; and Mary surrounded by the princes of the Church; the dying eyes of Jesus see only the faces of the infuriated mob, distorted with passion and eloquent of the hate they bear him; the dying eyes of the Mother see tender, reverent faces, wet with the tears that show how they

loved her; the ears of the dying Jesus hear only the execrations of the multitude, and “Vah! Vah! Come down from the Cross, and we will believe in Thee”; the ears of the dying Mother are open to sounds of heavenly rejoicing, and she learns that it is a gal day in Heaven, and that all the rejoicings are for her; over the cross of Jesus, the terrible face of the Father is bending in His anger, until the dying Son is forced to expostulate, “Why have You forsaken me?” Over the couch of the Mother is bending the most Holy Trinity, the Father whose omnipotence created her, the Spirit, whose love espoused her, the Son, her own Divine Son—she thinks she remembers those features—but it occurs to her that in all this there must be something wrong; that it scarcely befits the Mother to die as a Queen, and the Son to die as a criminal; the creature to die in peace, and the creator to die writhing in agony. But then Jesus will have it so; the life of His Mother has been a long martyrdom on His account. Her end at least shall be in peace.

No earthly thought mars her anticipated vision of Heaven, no earthly affection makes her parting from the earth feel bitter; she has been in the world, but she has not been of the world; she has walked over the earth without touching it; human affections she has had, but they have been centered in God; her every thought has been of God; her every wish has been to please God; her every desire has been a closer union with God. Her last thoughts, perhaps, linger over Nazareth and Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Calvary, all places hallowed by the presence of Jesus, but if the presence of God, with all His attributes shrouded in human flesh, could lend light to those places, and make the memory even of gloomy Calvary so dear, what must not Heaven be, where the same God reveals Himself in all the plenitude of His perfections.

No memories of sins long-buried, sins of youth, sins of riper years, rise up around her like accusing angels. Her life has been sinless; there is not one stain of earth upon her soul; there is not one word or thought or action of her life of which she could repent. Her will has ever been in conformity with the Will of God; patiently and thankfully she has always submitted to His dispensations, even when He decreed to plunge her in seas of Sorrow in which His omnipotence alone could have sustained her, and out of which His omnipotence alone could have rescued her. Therefore, for her judgment had no terrors; for her salvation is no uncertainty.

Judgment? She was judged long ago, years even before her birth, when the Most Holy Trinity destined her to be the Mother of the Son, and to fit her for that high privilege, declared that she should be exempt from the taint upon our race, that Sin and Hell should have no dominion over her, and commissioned the Holy Spirit to be her custodian, to preserve this temple of the Lord undefiled, to keep this Ark of the Covenant ever sanctifier. Faithfully did the Spirit discharge that commission; and, therefore, there is no judgment of Mary on her death-bed. For the Father does not judge His own decrees, neither does the Father judge the works of the Spirit.

With no tie on earth, with her only hope in Heaven; with no remorse for time, with no fears for eternity, dying out of pure love of God, assuredly the death of Mary is a happy one. Here upon earth are tears of sorrow, the only really eloquent testimony of worth appreciated, and Heaven is wild with joy at the prospect of her coming.

Amid songs of heavenly mirth and pæns of heavenly triumph, Jesus now unweaves with tender, reverent hands, the bands that are binding His Mother to earth. Once He was helpless in her arms, now is she helpless in His,

and now does He repay with the interest which God alone can give, all the tenderness, and reverence and love, that were lavished upon Him in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, and when He lay, cold and stiff and lifeless in His Mother’s lap on Calvary.

Slowly and with gentle respect does He free the soul from its prison, and there—Peter, John and Magdalen, guard with jealous eyes this treasure, it has enshrined the noblest soul that ever came from My Father’s hands; watch it with reverent care; in three days again We shall require it to grace the mansions of My Father’s House for eternity, and “Arise make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come; for the winter is past and gone: come from Libanus* my spouse, come from Libanus and thou shall be crowned,” and Jesus takes the soul of His Mother to Heaven, and the Apostles are weeping around the dead body of their Queen.

Of the glory of the Mother of God in Heaven it is difficult to form even an idea; yet by comparison we may learn it by approximation. If “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, if it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those who love hi,” what must heaven be to Her whose love for God surpassed in intensity the loves of all men and angels. If the measure of our merit upon earth shall be the measure of our happiness in Heaven, who shall presume to set bounds to the happiness of Her, whose least action was meritorious, for it was directed to the greater glory of God? If the happiness of Heaven is proportioned to the plenitude wherewith the Beatific Vision is revealed, what must not the happiness of Mary be, for as assuredly God will hide very little of His perfection from His Mother? If the purity of our lives here below will give us a clearer vision of God’s infinite attributes in Heaven, if the sanctity of our own Souls will be the medium through which we